

Reframing the Roman General in Byzantium

Onasander's Strategikos and the Shaping of the Ideal Byzantine Military Leader

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Produced in the first century CE, most likely before 59, Onasander's military manual, *Strategikos*, stands out from its predecessors by elaborating on morality, leadership, and morale.¹ These universally applicable themes and Onasander's concept of just war resonated deeply with its Christian and Byzantine readers.² This article

examines the impact of Onasander on Byzantine military manuals. It argues that the Byzantines selectively used, modified, and modernized the *Strategikos* to create a new vision of the ideal general, one compatible with their Christian faith and the unique sociopolitical, cultural, and administrative landscape of their empire. This then allows for further reflection on Byzantine military manuals and their authors, revealing that Onasander's concepts were integrated with material from florilegia and Isocrates' admonitory speeches, as well as bringing to the fore the dynamic relationship between tradition and originality in Byzantine military manuals.

Before delving into these aspects, however, a closer look at the *Strategikos* and its author will be beneficial. Our knowledge of Onasander stems primarily from that work and from an entry in the *Suda*, a tenth-century encyclopedia, which reads, "Onasander: A Platonic philosopher. [He wrote] *Tactics*, *On Generalship*, [and] *Commentaries on the Republic of Plato*."³ The *Strategikos*

1 *Onasandri strategicus*, ed. E. Korzenszky and R. Vári (Budapest, 1935), Eng. trans. W. A. Oldfather and C. H. Oldfather, "Onasander: The General," in *Aeneas Tacticus, Asclepiodotus, Onasander*, Loeb 156 (New York, 1928), 368–527. For a general introduction to the work of Onasander, see also P. Rance, "Introduction," in *Greek Taktika: Ancient Military Writing and Its Heritage. Proceedings of the International Conference on Greek Taktika Held at the University of Toruń, 7–11 April 2005*, ed. P. Rance and N. V. Sekunda (Gdansk, 2017), 9–63, at 20–21; and P. Rance, "The Ideal of the Roman General in Byzantium: The Reception of Onasander's *Strategikos* in Byzantine Military Literature," in *Generalship in Ancient Greece, Rome and Byzantium*, ed. R. Evans and S. Tougher (Edinburgh, 2022), 242–63, at 244–47.

2 For the value and the purpose of the work in antiquity and late antiquity, see, among others, P. Mesplé, "Pour une relecture des stratèges antiques: L'exemple du *Strategikos* d'Onosander," in *Dialogue militaire entre anciens et modernes*, ed. J.-P. Bois (Rennes, 2004), 25–38; M. Formisano, "The *Strategikós* of Onasander: Taking Military Texts Seriously," *Technai* 2 (2011): 39–52. Cf. D. A. Chiritoiu, "Commanding Texts: Knowledge-Ordering, Identity Construction and Ethics in 'Military Manuals' of the Roman Empire" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2018), 56–65, 69–85, 165–200, 208–12; and C. Whately, "Military Manuals from Aeneas Tacticus to Maurice: Origins, Scholarship, Genre, Audience, and History," in *Greek and Roman Military Manuals: Genre and History*, ed. J. T. Chlup and C. Whately (New York, 2021), 17–38, at 23–30; H. M. Schellenberg, "The Limited Source Value of Works of Military Literature," *ibid.*,

39–54, at 42–47; I. Eramo, "Is War an Art? The Past, Present, and Future of Greek, Roman and Byzantine Military Literature," *ibid.*, 265–89, at 266–78.

3 *Suda* O 386: Ὀνόσανδρος, φιλόσοφος Πλατωνικός. Τακτικά, Περὶ στρατηγημάτων, Ὑπομνήματα εἰς τὰς Πλάτωνος Πολιτείας, ed. A. Adler, *Suidae Lexicon*, 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1928–38), Eng. trans. adapted from D. Whitehead, "Onosandros," *Suda On Line: Byzantine Lexicography*, ed. D. Whitehead, <https://www.cs.uky.edu/~raphael/sol/sol-entries/omicron/386>, and *Onasandri strategicus* pref.33–52. The entry reads Onosandros, but Onasander and Onosander were, most probably, different versions of the same name.

was either another title for *On Generalship* or a combination of *On Generalship* with *Tactics*. Even though Onasander was a platonic philosopher, lacking firsthand military experience, he felt that he could demonstrate to Roman generals how successful past commanders achieved distinction.⁴ With the *Strategikos*, he authored a comparative examination of practical and moral aspects of warfare, dedicating it to Quintus Veranius, who was personally involved in warfare, holding the offices of consul and *legatus* in Britain (49 CE).⁵ While Onasander claims to draw on Roman experience, his work was heavily influenced by Greek sources, likely Xenophon, Plato, Polybius, and perhaps Aeneas the Tactician.⁶

The *Strategikos* opens with an examination of the qualities of the ideal general and their moral, psychological, and practical implications (chaps. 1–3). This is followed by a section dedicated to the concept of just war (chaps. 4–5). The remaining thirty-six chapters delve into the practicalities of warfare, offering guidance on, for example, sieges, troop training, treatment of prisoners (chaps. 10, 35, 38–41), establishing and relocating camps (chaps. 8, 9, 10.4), and conducting raids and guerrilla warfare (chaps. 6.7, 7, 10.2, 10.5, 10.7, 11.1, 21).

Onasander's contribution endured, influencing future generals and military authors. Traces of his work concerning tactics can be found in Byzantine military treatises.⁷ The *Strategikos* served as a linguistic

and conceptual model for the *Strategikon* of Emperor Maurice (582–602), who drew on Onasander for his proverbs, similes, and discussions of tactics and training.⁸ The tenth century and beyond witnessed a significant rise in Onasander's influence. The literary and cultural developments of the Macedonian Renaissance, coupled with the Muslim threat, spurred both the production of new military manuals and the reproduction of classical ones.⁹ This period between the tenth and the eleventh centuries yielded five surviving manuscripts of Onasander's *Strategikos*, with one of the manuscripts containing a tenth-century paraphrase of the work.¹⁰ Furthermore, Leo VI's *Taktika* (ca. 900–912)

in *the Medieval Roman World and Beyond*, ed. C. Whately, Reading Medieval Sources 8 (Leiden, 2024), 255–99, at 261. For timeless principles of war, see G. Theotokis, "Timeless Principles of War and the Vertical Transmission of Military Knowledge through the *Taktika*," in *ibid.*, 401–36.

8 P. Rance, "Tactics and Tactica in the Sixth Century: Tradition and Originality" (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 1994), 96–102; P. Rance, "*Simulacra Pugnae*: The Literary and Historical Tradition of Mock Battles in the Roman and Early Byzantine Army," *GRBS* 41 (2000): 223–75, at 238–44; P. Rance, "'Win but Do Not Overwin': The History of a Proverb from the *Sententiae Menandri*, and a Classical Allusion in St. Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*," *Philologus* 152 (2008): 191–204, at 192, n. 4; Rance, "Ideal of the Roman General," 247–51. See also P. Rance, "Maurice's *Strategikon* and 'the Ancients': The Late Antique Reception of Aelian and Arrian," in Rance and Sekunda, *Greek Taktika*, 217–55. Cf. V. V. Kučma, "'Strategikos' Onasandra i 'Strategikon' Mavrikiia: Opieit sravnitel'noi kharakteristiki," *VizVrem* 43 (1982): 35–53; 45 (1985): 20–34; 46 (1986): 109–23.

9 For the broader background, see P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin: Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au X^e siècle* (Paris, 1971), 242–300; W. Treadgold, "The Macedonian Renaissance," in *Renaissances before the Renaissance: Cultural Revivals of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. W. Treadgold (Stanford, CA, 1984), 75–98; and W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival, 780–842* (Stanford, CA, 1988), 373–84. For the milieu that enabled the emergence of military treatise in the ninth to eleventh century, see Chatzelis, "Wars and Cultural Wars."

10 For the manuscripts, see A. Dain, *Les manuscrits d'Onésandros* (Paris, 1930), 15–47; J. Irigoin, "Pour une étude des centres de copie byzantins (suite)," *Scriptorium* 13 (1959): 177–209, at 178–81; A. Dain, "Les stratégistes byzantins," *TM* 2 (1967): 317–92, at 382–87; C. M. Mazzucchi, "Dagli anni di Basilio Parakimomenos (Cod. Ambr. B 119 sup)," *Aevum* 52 (1978): 267–316; and Rance, "Ideal of the Roman General," 251–55. The tenth-century paraphrase of Onasander features adaptations on the technical level and includes Byzantine technical terms, such as *klibanion* (lamellar armor) and *stabara* (stake barricade), see Anon., *Paraphrase of Onasander* 52.589, in Korzenszky and Vári, *Onasandri strategicus* 25–84; C. G. Lowe, *A Byzantine Paraphrase of Onasander* (St. Louis, 1927), 3; Haldon, *Critical Commentary*, 243; and Rance, "Ideal of the Roman General," 254–55.

4 For more on Onasander and his work, see C. J. Smith, "Onasander on How to Be a General," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, suppl. 71 (1998): 151–66, at 154; Y. Le Bohec, "Que voulait Onésandros?," in *Claude de Lyon, empereur romain*, ed. Y. Burnand, Y. Le Bohec, and J.-P. Martin (Paris, 1998), 169–79; A. Galimberti, "Lo *Strategikòs* di Onasandro," in *Guerra e diritto nel mondo greco e romano*, ed. M. Sordi (Milan, 2002), 141–53; Rance, "Ideal of the Roman General," 244–46. For authors with no military experience authoring military manuals, see N. Williams, "The Blind Leading the Blind? Civilian Writers and Audiences of Military Manuals in the Roman World," in Chlup and Whately, *Greek and Roman Military Manuals*, 55–87.

5 *Onasandri strategicus* pref.17–32; Smith, "Onasander," 152–66; and Chiritoiu, "Commanding Texts," 56–65, 69–85.

6 For Onasander's sources, see D. Ambaglio, "Il trattato 'Sul comandante' di Onasandro," *Athenaeum* 59 (1981): 353–77; and W. Peters, *Untersuchungen zu Onasander* (Bonn, 1972), 84–246.

7 See the general remarks of W. E. J. Kaege Jr., *Some Thoughts on Byzantine Military Strategy* (Brookline, MA, 1983), 3–22; J. Haldon, *A Critical Commentary on the Taktika of Leo VI*, DOS 44 (Washington, DC, 2014); and G. Chatzelis, "Wars and Cultural Wars: The Military, Cultural and Ideological Background to the Emergence of Byzantine Military Treatises (c. 800–1100)," in *Military Literature*

demonstrates clear influences from Onasander, particularly in discussions of surprise attacks, siege warfare, pitched battles, encampment, marches, and treatment of prisoners.¹¹ Similarly, the *Sylloge tacticorum* (ca. 927–944) incorporates Onasander's ideas in the sections on siege warfare, prisoner treatment, pitched battles, camps, raids, guerrilla tactics, and navigating mountain passes.¹² Nikephoros Ouranos also drew upon Onasander for his *Taktika* (ca. 1000), especially for statements on deceiving enemies, posting guards, troop motivation, and deployment. Unfortunately, most of Ouranos's treatise has not been edited, hindering further analysis.¹³ Finally, Katakalon Kekaumenos, in his admonitory manual *Consilia et narrationes*, found value in Onasander's emphasis on maintaining camp hygiene and on strategies for recovering from defeat.¹⁴

Nevertheless, military leadership in antiquity and the Middle Ages was not merely about mastering strategy and battle tactics, but also about developing a moral compass that facilitated divine favor and adhered to the principles of just war. Examining Onasander's ideas on the matter and their reception by the Byzantines will contribute to a richer understanding of the shaping of Byzantine ideals of military leadership.

Verbatim Virtues: Byzantine Adoption of Onasander's Ideal Leader

Onasander perceives Roman success as a product of virtuous leadership.¹⁵ It comes as no surprise, therefore, that his presentation of the ideal general is imbued with an emphasis on morality. This ideal general embodies both moral character as well as tactical and strategic competence, all in the setting of a just war.¹⁶ This emphasis on morality and virtue allowed the Byzantines to retain most of the material of the *Strategikos* without any adaptation or variation. Imitating the *Strategikos*, the *Taktika* of Leo VI and the *Sylloge tacticorum* open their treatment of warfare by discussing the qualities of the ideal military leader. Onasander's arguments that the general should be self-restrained, vigilant, frugal, middle-aged, a father of children, an able speaker, neither too severe nor too tolerant, neither indecisive nor too opinionated, accessible, cheerful, reluctant to fight in person, able to endure toil and hardship, able to keep plans secret, and chosen not on account of his wealth and noble descent but on his way of life and achievements are reproduced almost verbatim in the *Taktika* of Leo VI and the *Sylloge tacticorum*.¹⁷

15 *Onasandri strategicus* pref.21–32.

16 J. T. Chlup, "Just War in Onasander's Στρατηγικός," *Journal of Ancient History* 2 (2014): 37–63, at 41–42, 58.

17 Self-restrained: *Onasandri strategicus* 1.61–63; Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.3, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, DOT 12, CFHB 49, rev. ed. (Washington, DC, 2014), 17. Vigilant: *Onasandri strategicus* 1.64–65; Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.4; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.9, ed. A. Dain (Paris, 1938), Eng. trans. Chatzelis and Harris, *Tenth-Century Byzantine Military Manual*, 22. Frugal: *Onasandri strategicus* 1.66–67; Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.5; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.8. Middle-aged: *Onasandri strategicus* 11.80–90; Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.9; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.32–33. Father of children: *Onasandri strategicus* 1.91–96; Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.11; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.34. Able speaker: *Onasandri strategicus* 1.97–111; Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.12; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.30–31. Neither too severe nor too tolerant: *Onasandri strategicus* 2.155–57; Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.19; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.38. Not indecisive and opinionated: *Onasandri strategicus* 3.176–81; Leo VI, *Taktika* 4.5; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.23. Accessible: *Onasandri strategicus* 11.2.540–46; Anon., *Paraphrase of Onasander* 23.45–52; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.29. Cheerful: *Onasandri strategicus* 13; Anon., *Paraphrase of Onasander* 25.67–87; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.12. Reluctant to fight in person: *Onasandri strategicus* 33; Anon., *Paraphrase of Onasander* 42.388–415; Leo VI, *Taktika* 14.99; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 4.1–2. Able to endure toil and hardship: *Onasandri strategicus* 1.68–69; Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.6; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.19. Able to keep plans

11 See Haldon, *Critical Commentary*; Rance, "Ideal of the Roman General," 255–56.

12 For the complete list of passages deriving from Onasander, see G. Chatzelis and J. Harris, trans., *A Tenth-Century Byzantine Military Manual: The Sylloge Tacticorum*, BBOS 22 (New York, 2017); Rance, "Ideal of the Roman General," 257. For the study of *Sylloge tacticorum*, see G. Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals as Literary Works and Practical Handbooks: The Case of the Tenth-Century Sylloge Tacticorum* (New York, 2019), 27–39, 72–75.

13 For Nikephoros Ouranos and his sources, see A. Dain, *La "Tactique" de Nicéphore Ouranos* (Paris, 1937); E. McGeer, "Tradition and Reality in the *Taktika* of Nikephoros Ouranos," *DOP* 45 (1991): 129–40, at 132; E. McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century*, DOS 33 (Washington, DC, 1995), 80–86; F. R. Trombley, "The *Taktika* of Nikephoros Ouranos and Military Encyclopaedism," in *Pre-modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1–4 July 1996*, ed. P. Binkley (Leiden, 1997), 261–74; Nikephoros Ouranos, *Taktika* 66.1–74, ed. J.-A. de Foucault, "Douze chapitres inédits de la *Tactique* de Nicéphore Ouranos," *TM* 5 (1973): 281–312. See also Rance, "Ideal of the Roman General," 257–58.

14 C. Roueché, "The Literary Background of Kekaumenos," in *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. C. Holmes and J. Waring, *The Medieval Mediterranean* 42 (Leiden, 2002), 111–38, at 121–22.

There are mainly two reasons why retaining material from the *Strategikos* was feasible in Byzantine culture. The first pertains to the fact that Byzantine secular culture and education were deeply rooted in the works of Greek authors from antiquity and late antiquity.¹⁸ Those who received a lay education became familiar with rhetoric and its introductory form, the *progymnasmata*, which taught and encouraged them to paraphrase, adapt, and engage with classical models.¹⁹ In addition, Byzantine literature, especially

secret: *Onasandri strategicus* 10.9.471–85; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 6.1. Chosen for his character and achievements: *Onasandri strategicus* 2.116–53; Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.14–15; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.36–37.

18 See P. Speck, *Die Kaiserliche Universität von Konstantinopel: Präzisierungen zur Frage des höheren Schulwesens in Byzanz im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert*, *ByzArch* 14 (Munich, 1974); R. Browning, “Literacy in the Byzantine World,” *BMGS* 4 (1978): 39–54; R. Browning, “Further Reflections of Literacy in the Byzantine World,” in *To Ellhnikón: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, ed. J. S. Langdon, S. Reinert, and J. S. Allen, 2 vols. (New Rochelle, NY, 1993), 2:69–84; Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantine*, 43–300; P. Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XI^e siècle byzantin* (Paris, 1977); M. Mullett and R. Scott, eds., *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition: University of Birmingham Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, 1979* (Birmingham, 1981); Treadgold, *Byzantine Revival*, 373–84; N. G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, rev. ed. (London, 1996); Holmes and Waring, *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission*; B. Katsaros, “Προδρομικοί θεσμοί για την οργάνωση της ανώτερης εκπαίδευσης της εποχής των Κομνηνών από την προκομνηνεία περίοδο,” in *The Empire in Crisis (?): Byzantium in the 11th Century (1025–1081)*, ed. V. N. Vlyssidou, International Symposium 11 (Athens, 2003), 443–71; I. X. Nesseris, “Η παιδεία στην Κωνσταντινούπολη κατά τον 12ο αιώνα,” 2 vols. (PhD diss., University of Ioannina, 2014); A. Markopoulos, “L’éducation à Byzance aux IX^e–X^e siècles: Problèmes et questions diverses,” *TM* 21.2 (2017): 53–73; S. Steckel, N. Gaul, and M. Grünbart, eds., *Networks of Learning: Perspectives on Scholars in Byzantine East and Latin West, c. 1000–1200*, *Byzantinistische Studien und Texte* 6 (Berlin, 2014); T. Antonopoulou, S. Kotzabassi, and M. Loukaki, eds., *Myriobiblos: Essays on Byzantine Literature and Culture*, *ByzArch* 29 (Berlin, 2015).

19 See, for example, Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata*, 62.10–64.28, ed. and trans. M. Patillon and G. Bolognesi (Paris, 1997), 4–8, Eng. trans. G. A. Kennedy, in *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta, 2003), 6–7; G. L. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, *Analekta Vlatadon* 17 (Thessaloniki, 1973); H. Hunger, “The Classical Tradition in Byzantine Literature: The Importance of Rhetoric,” in Mullett and Scott, *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, 35–47; R. F. Hock and E. N. O’Neil, eds., *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, vol. 1: *The Progymnasmata* (Atlanta, 1986), 3–47; V. Valiavitcharska, *Rhetoric and Rhythm in Byzantium: The Sound of Persuasion* (New York, 2013); A. Markopoulos, “Teachers and Textbooks in Byzantium, Ninth to Eleventh Centuries,” in Steckel, Gaul, and Grünbart, *Networks of Learning*, 3–15.

scientific and technical works, heavily relied on classical sources.²⁰ The Byzantines often regarded the classical past as authoritative and perceived a radical departure from tradition negatively;²¹ for this reason, Byzantine tacticians viewed their Roman predecessors as authorities on tactics and leadership and reproduced much of their content verbatim. In fact, it was a literary convention for Byzantine war authors to showcase their erudition by reproducing authoritative classical works, to downplay their own contribution, or to apologize for having deviated from established classical practices.²²

The second reason stems from the partial compatibility of pagan and Christian morality. Without a doubt this factor played a crucial role in the aristocracy’s adoption of Christianity, since the acceptance of the new faith did not require a reform of the traditional secular education, which remained deeply rooted in the classics. This compatibility also allowed prominent and influential bishops, like the church fathers, to study and utilize the classical tradition in their works. Basil of Caesarea (330–379), who was well versed in the classics, facilitated the emergence of Byzantine classicism, reconciling Christian faith with classical culture. He argued that one would benefit from studying classical authors without compromising his faith if he drew from them aspects that promoted virtue. Thus, classical

20 See H. Hunger, “On the Imitation (μίμησις) of Antiquity in Byzantine Literature,” *DOP* 23/24 (1969–70): 15–38; E. Schiffer and A. Rhoby, eds., *Imitatio Aemulatio Variatio: Akten des internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposions zur byzantinischen Sprache und Literatur (Wien, 22.–25. Oktober 2008)*, Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung 21 (Vienna, 2010).

21 A. P. Kazhdan and A. Cutler, “Innovation,” *ODB* 2:997–98; A. Cutler, “Originality as a Cultural Phenomenon,” in *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music: A Collection of Essays*, ed. A. R. Littlewood (Oxford, 1995), 203–16. Cf. A. Spanos, “‘To Every Innovation, Anathema’ (?): Some Preliminary Thoughts on the Study of Byzantine Innovation,” in *Mysterion, strategike og kainotomia: Et festskrift til ære for Jonny Holbek*, ed. H. Knudsen et al. (Oslo, 2010), 51–59; and A. Spanos, “Was Innovation Unwanted in Byzantium?” in *Wanted: Byzantium. The Desire for a Lost Empire*, ed. I. Nilsson and P. Stephenson (Uppsala, 2014), 43–56, who has partly revised these notions.

22 For more recent studies focusing on tradition and originality in Byzantine military manuals, see Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals*, 72–100; and G. Chatzelis, “Byzantine Education and Military Manuals: Military, Intellectual and Moral Edification in Byzantium,” in *Das antike Militärwesen: Autoren, Werke und ihr Nachleben*, ed. F. Fiorucci, *Paradeigmata* 77 (Baden-Baden, 2024), 111–53, at 112–39.

literature was to be approached like bees approached flowers, since they do not “get honey from . . . all flowers equally, nor . . . do they carry it off in its entirety, but taking only so much as is suitable for their work, they leave the rest to go untouched.”²³ This became both the official stance of the Church as well as the mainstream way in which educated aristocrats and officials approached the classical tradition; they drew from it only what they regarded as beneficial and compatible with Christianity.²⁴

The qualities of the military leader reproduced from the *Strategikos* by the Byzantines are indicative of the above approach. Their alignment with Christian morality is so remarkable that several of the character traits discussed by Onasander, such as temperance,

resonate with Christian sins when one converts them to their corresponding negative traits.²⁵

Beyond Roman Morality: Christianizing the Roman General

While Greek literature was compatible with Christianity in the sense that it promoted virtue, there remained an undercurrent of unease. Classical literature was the product of a pagan civilization whose religion and values partly clashed with Christian mentality and dogma. Even when classical works promote virtue compatible with Christian values, they mainly put emphasis on reason, limiting the impact of divine intervention and providence to the periphery.²⁶ Byzantine military authors were faced with these issues when they mined the *Strategikos* for the shaping of their ideal military leader. To reconcile the classical model of leadership with their Christian values, Byzantine military authors employed three key strategies. The first involved adding new values to the core traits of the ideal Byzantine military leader. The second was to add a spiritual dimension to Onasander's virtues in order to directly connect them with divine intervention and assistance. The third involved a slight adaptation or omission of passages that conflicted with Christianity or were inappropriate for reproduction. For this endeavor, Byzantine military authors relied on the biblical tradition, earlier Byzantine treatises (e.g., mirrors for princes and military manuals), and on their own original thoughts and perceptions.²⁷

As far as the first strategy is concerned, perhaps the most significant shortcoming of the *Strategikos* is its relative neglect of piety. Onasander notes the

23 Basil of Caesarea, *To the Young Ones, How to Benefit from Greek Literature* 4.36–47: ταῖς μελίτταις δ' ἄρα καὶ μέλι λαμβάνειν . . . οὐτε ἅπασιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παραπλησίως . . . οὐτε μὴν οἷς ἂν ἐπιπτώσιν ὅλα φέρειν ἐπιχειροῦσιν, ἀλλ' ὅσον αὐτῶν ἐπιτήδειον πρὸς τὴν ἐργασίαν λαβοῦσαι, τὸ λοιπὸν χαίρειν ἀφήκαν, ed. and trans. F. Boulenger (Paris, 1935), 45–46, Eng. trans. R. J. Deferrari and M. R. P. McGuire, in *The Letters*, vol. 4: *Address to Young Men On Reading Greek Literature*, Loeb 270 (Cambridge, MA, 1934), 391. See also Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantine*, 44–54, 243–55; Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, 8–17; G. Tsampis, *Η παιδεία στο χριστιανικό Βυζάντιο* (Athens, 1998), 75–104, 167–200, 237–39, 246; D. J. Constantelos, “Hellenic Paideia and the Church Fathers: Educational Principles and Cultural Heritage,” in *The Church and the Library: Studies in Honor of Rev. Dr. George C. Papademetriou*, ed. D. Papademetriou and A. J. Sopko (Boston, MA, 2005), 157–74; A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (New York, 2007), 120–72; V. Ježek, “Education as a Unifying and ‘Uplifting’ Force in Byzantium,” *BSI* 65 (2007): 167–200, at 185–99; A. Vakaloudi, *Αγωγή και μόρφωση των παιδιών και των εφήβων στο πρώιμο Βυζάντιο: Αρχαίες ελληνικές και σύγχρονες διδακτικές και παιδαγωγικές αντιλήψεις στα έργα των Πατέρων της Εκκλησίας* (Thessaloniki, 2013), 13–26, 225–78, 282–84; and E. Chrysos, “Περὶ παιδείας λόγος,” in Antonopoulou, Kotzabassi and Loukaki, *Myriobiblos*, 85–97.

24 For the readings of emperors and generals, see P. Rance, “Late Byzantine Elites and Military Literature: Authors, Readers and Manuscripts (c.1050–c.1450),” in *A Military History of the Mediterranean Sea: Aspects of War, Diplomacy, and Military Elites*, ed. G. Theotokis and A. Yıldız, *History of Warfare* 118 (Leiden, 2018), 255–86; G. Chatzelis, “Imperial Office and Education: The Ideal of the Educated Emperor and Its Reception in Middle-Byzantine Historiography and Iconography,” *Βυζαντιακά* 36 (2020–21): 191–230, at 198–208; Chatzelis, “Byzantine Education and Military Manuals”; S. Kyriakidis, “The Reading of Military Manuals in Byzantium from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Centuries,” in Whately, *Military Literature*, 300–324.

25 For similar perceptions of warfare in the classical and biblical past, see H. G. Reventlow, “The Biblical and Classical Tradition of ‘Just War,’” in *Politics and Theopolitics in the Bible and Postbiblical Literature*, ed. H. G. Reventlow, Y. Hoffman, and B. Uffenheimer (Sheffield, 1994), 160–75.

26 Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 134–35.

27 For Christian elements in the profile of the ideal Byzantine general, see also the helpful studies of G. Strano, “Valore militare e cultura religiosa nella formazione del perfetto generale bizantino,” in *Storia, religione e società tra Oriente e Occidente (secoli IX–XIX)*, ed. A. Vaccaro (Lecce, Italy, 2013), 175–88; M. L. D. Riedel, *Leo VI and the Transformation of Byzantine Christian Identity: Writings of an Unexpected Emperor* (Cambridge, 2018), 74–94; M. L. D. Riedel, “‘God Has Sent the Thunder’: Ideological Distinctives of Middle Byzantine Military Manuals,” in Chlup and Whately, *Greek and Roman Military Manuals*, 245–64.

importance of sacrificing to the gods, but he does not treat piety extensively nor include it as a prominent quality of his ideal military leader.²⁸ The Byzantine tacticians recognized this limitation and sought to address it in their manuals. The author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* emphasizes the importance of piety as a core quality of his ideal general, noting that “piety [is] the safest foundation of all and it bestows steadfastness and surety on all actions.” This concept is akin to Matthew 7:24–25, which references the certainty that following the word of God provides, equivalent to building a house on a rock.²⁹ Leo VI goes a lot further than the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* in his attention to piety. It has been argued that Leo VI saw the *Taktika* as a religious manifesto in which the general would feature as the perfect soldier of Christ. Drawing partly on the scriptures and Maurice’s *Strategikon*, and partly on his own reasoning, Leo VI imbues the Byzantine ideal military leader with the core Christian elements of piety and morality. He instructs the general to be “most attentive to divine matters and his relationship with God” as well as “plain and simple in matters of food and clothing.” The ideal military leader ought to love God with all his heart and find solace and support in prayer. Without a doubt, Leo VI elevates piety to a vital principle, suggesting that success ultimately depends on God’s providence, not just on human tactical and strategic planning, irrespective of how intelligently one commands or how weak the enemy is.³⁰ Similar sentiments are also

found in Kakatalon Kekaumenos’s advice to military commanders. Piety, along with temperance, features as one of the most vital traits of the Byzantine general. In addition, constant and wholehearted prayer is deemed essential for success, since victory is “entirely God’s gift; for without God, it is impossible to catch a sparrow.”³¹

A second key Christian value absent from Onasander’s discussion is righteousness. The author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* incorporates this virtue into the core traits of his ideal general and elaborates this concept from a Christian perspective. He argues that the general should be righteous because he “must bring himself forward as the standard for his subordinates,” since failure to prevent his soldiers from acting unfairly and to punish their injustices equals being unjust in the eyes of God.³² Righteousness is also central to Kekaumenos’s conception of the ideal military leader. On the one hand, the Byzantine general ought to endeavor to become the most virtuous man in his army, and, on the other, the soldiers under his command are expected to be virtuous and to emulate the general’s righteous disposition. Armed with this union of justice and righteousness, the army is then expected to prevail with both physical and spiritual weapons, for “justice is a weapon of war.”³³ Similar concepts, but with less emphasis on divine judgment, are found in the works

28 Onasandri *strategicus* 34.945–46, 37.1028–32; Dain, *Les manuscrits d’Onésandros*, 153–57.

29 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.4: Θεοσεβῆ μέν, ἐπειδὴ κρηπίδα πάντων ἀσφαλεστάτην τὴν εὐσέβειαν ἐπιστάμεθα τοῖς πρακτέοις πᾶσι χαρίζομένην τὸ στάσιμόν τε καὶ ἔμπεδον (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 22); Matthew 7:24–25. Cf. Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.24.

30 Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.18, 2.22–25, 20 and epilogue: καὶ μάλιστα τοῦ θείου καὶ περὶ τὰ θεῖα πράγματα ἐπιμελέστατον; λιτός τε καὶ ἀπλούς περὶ τὴν διαίταν καὶ τὸ ἔνδυμα (trans. Dennis, 27–33). For biblical allusions in these passages and reliance on Maurice’s *Strategikon*, see M. L. D. Riedel, “Fighting the Good Fight: The *Taktika* of Leo VI and Its Influence on Byzantine Cultural Identity” (PhD diss., Oxford University, 2010), 126–37; Haldon, *Critical Commentary*, 131–34. For further analysis about the role of religion in Leo VI’s *Taktika*, see G. Dagron, “Byzance et le modèle islamique au X^e siècle: A propos des *Constitutions tactiques* de l’empereur Léon VI,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 127 (1983): 219–43, at 224–32; Riedel, “Fighting the Good Fight”; M. L. D. Riedel, “The Sacrality of a Sovereign: Leo VI and Politics in Middle Byzantium,” in *Zwei Sonnen am Goldenen Horn?: Kaiserliche und patriarchale Macht im byzantinischen Mittelalter. Akten der*

internationalen Tagung vom 3. bis 5. November 2010, ed. M. Grünbart, L. Rickelt, and M. M. Vučetić, *Byzantinistische Studien und Texte* 3, 2 vols. (Berlin, 2011–13), 1:127–36. See also N. E. Kourakes, “Συμβολή στη μελέτη των πηγών του έργου *Τακτικά* Λέοντος Στ’ του Σοφού και του τρόπου προσέγγισης από αυτό των θρησκευτικών ζητημάτων,” in *Αντικλήνωρ: Τιμητικός τόμος Σπύρου Ν. Τρωϊάνου για τα ογδοηκοστά γενέθλιά του*, ed. B. Leontaritou, K. A. Mpourdara, and E. S. Papagianni (Athens, 2013), 705–37, at 726–37. For the incorporation of Christian elements in the *Strategikon*, see J. Wood, “Military Manuals, Masculinity, and the Making of Christian Soldiers in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Early Christian History* 11.1 (2021): 88–128, at 108–18.

31 Katakalon Kekaumenos, *Consilia et narrationes* 12.26–31; 98.16: ἐπὶ δὲ τι κατορθώσεις, Θεοῦ πάντως ἔσται δώρημα· χωρὶς γὰρ Θεοῦ ἀδύνατον ἐστὶ στρουθίον θηρεῦσαι, ed. and trans. C. Roueché (2013), <https://ancientwisdoms.ac.uk/library/kekaumenos-consilia-et-narrationes/>.

32 Pseudo-Leo, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.5: κανόνα χρῆ τοῖς ὑπηκόοις ἐαυτὸν προτιθέναι τὸν στρατηγόν (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 22).

33 Katakalon Kekaumenos, *Consilia et narrationes* 16.10, 21.1–10. The Greek reads ἐπὶ λα γὰρ πολέμου δικαιοσύνη (trans. Roueché).

of Isocrates, in precepts attributed to Pythagoras, and in Byzantine admonitory works.³⁴

For the addition of a spiritual dimension to the existing virtues of the *Strategikos*, it is worth looking at how the Byzantines reworked Onasander's views of the general's good reputation. Onasander states that the general should be a man of good reputation because then soldiers have "a spontaneous and natural love for him, they are quick to obey his commands, they do not distrust him, and they cooperate with him when in danger."³⁵ Leo VI, on the other hand, reinterprets Onasander's concept of love for the general by connecting it to the Christian ideals of devotion and self-sacrificing love. Although he agrees with the *Strategikos* that soldiers quickly obey and cooperate with a general whom they love, he draws on the Gospel of John and concludes that "such is love: to lay down one's life on behalf of the person one loves."³⁶ Kekaumenos adopts a slightly different perspective on this issue. For him, it is neither fear nor love alone that guarantees a general's authority, but rather a judicious combination of both, stemming from a reputation for unyielding yet fair and humane justice.³⁷ These transformations highlight the Byzantine viewpoint that the ideal general not only commanded respect, but also inspired virtue, religious devotion, and a sense of shared purpose among his troops.

Another significant example is Onasander's treatment of temperance. The *Strategikos* argues that the general must be temperate so as not to neglect his duties.

34 Isocrates, *To Nicocles* 31.2–4, ed. and trans. É. Brémond and G. Mathieu, *Isocrate: Discours*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1928–66), 2:106, Eng. trans. G. Norlin and L. Van Hook, *Isocrates*, Loeb 209, 229, 373, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1928–45), 1:57–59; Anon., *Corpus Parisinum* 4.180, ed. and trans. D. M. Searby, 2 vols. (Lewiston, NY, 2007), 2:733; Photios, *Letter to Boris of Bulgaria* 1.819, 1.861, ed. B. Laourdas and L. G. Westerink (Leipzig, 1983–88), Eng. trans. D. S. White and J. R. Berrigan, *The Patriarch and the Prince: The Letter of Patriarch Photios of Constantinople to Khan Boris of Bulgaria* (Brookline, MA, 1982), 65, 67.

35 *Onasandri strategicus* 1.87–90, 112–15: ἄνθρωποι φιλοῦσιν αὐτομάτῃ διανοίας ἐμπτώσει, τούτῳ ταχὺ μὲν ἐπιτάττονται πείθονται, λέγοντι δ' οὐκ ἀπιστοῦσι, κινδυνεύοντι δὲ συναγωνίζονται (trans. Oldfather and Oldfather, 379); Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.33, 1.35: ὅντινα γὰρ ἄνθρωποι φιλοῦσιν αὐτομάτῃ διανοίας προθέσει, τούτῳ ταχὺ μὲν ἐπιτάττονται πείθονται, κινδυνεύοντι συναγωνίζονται, λέγοντι δ' οὐκ ἀπιστοῦσι.

36 Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.10, 2.13: τοιοῦτον γὰρ ἡ ἀγάπη, τὸ τίθεσθαι τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπὲρ τοῦ φιλουμένου (trans. Dennis, 21–23); John 15:13; and Haldon, *Critical Commentary*, 132.

37 Katakalon Kekaumenos, *Consilia et narrationes* 14.1–15.

This practical and rational approach is deemed insufficient by the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum*, who, while copying Onasander's observation almost verbatim, also incorporates an additional explanation—namely, that "God provides us with trophies and victories against the enemy whenever we make a stand against our passions, and since we are victorious over the invisible enemies, we then triumph over the visible ones."³⁸ The extant source for this statement is the *Hortatory Chapters* of Basil I (867–886), a mirror for princes compiled for the edification of the future emperor Leo VI. Whether it was directly reproduced from Basil I's *Hortatory Chapters* or from an admonitory lost source common to both authors, it couples temperance with moral victory over one's passions, suggesting that internal struggles influence external triumphs. By internalizing Christian values, the general embodies the moral leadership needed to secure God's favor and ultimately achieve military success. This mentality resonated with imperial ideology, which viewed the Byzantines as the new chosen people and the Byzantine emperor and his generals as part of divine providence. Success hinged not just on practical skills but also on morality and closeness to God.³⁹

38 *Onasandri strategicus* 1.59–60: σῶφρονα μὲν, ἵνα μὴ ταῖς φυσικαῖς ἀνθελκόμενος ἡδοναῖς ἀπολείπῃ τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν μεγίστων φροντίδα; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.7: σῶφρονα δὲ, ἵνα μὴ ταῖς φυσικαῖς ἀνθελκόμενος ἡδοναῖς τὴν περὶ τῶν μεγίστων ἀπολείπῃ φροντίδα, ἄλλως τε καὶ ὅτι τότε νίκας ἡμῖν κατ' ἐχθρῶν καὶ τρόπαια παρέχει Θεός, ὅποτε τὰν τρόπαια κατὰ τῶν παθῶν ἰστώμεν αὐτοί, νικῶσι γὰρ τοὺς ἀοράτους ἐχθροὺς ἔπειτα νικᾶν καὶ τοὺς ὁρατοὺς (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 22).

39 Basil I, *Hortatory Chapters* 1.11: Νίκας σοι καὶ τρόπαια κατὰ ἐχθρῶν τότε παρέξει θεός, ὅποτε καὶ αὐτὸς τρόπαια καὶ νίκας στήσῃς κατὰ τῶν παθῶν· νικῶντι γὰρ σοι τοὺς ἀοράτους ἐχθροὺς ἐπ' ἀνάγκης ἔπεισθαι νικᾶν καὶ τοὺς ὁρατοὺς, ed. and trans. K. D. S. Pidas, *Δύο παραινετικά κείμενα πρὸς τὸν Λέοντα ΣΤ'*, *Keimena Vyzantinēs Logotechnias* 5 (Athens, 2009), 127–29. Basil I's authorship has been doubted on the grounds of his illiteracy. Some have proposed patriarch Photios as the real author of the text. See A. Markopoulos, "Autour des Chapitres parénétiques de Basile Ier," in *Εὐψυχία: Mélanges offerts à Hélène Abreweiler*, ed. M. Balard et al., *Byzantina Sorbonensia* 16, 2 vols. (Paris, 1998), 2:469–79; P. Odorico, "Les miroirs des princes à Byzance: Une lecture horizontale," in *L'éducation au gouvernement et à la vie: La tradition des "règles de vie" de l'antiquité au moyen âge. Actes du colloque international, Pise, 18 et 19 mars 2005*, ed. P. Odorico, *Autour de Byzance* 1 (Paris, 2009), 223–46, at 234–40; S. Tougher, "Macedonian Mirrors: The Advice of Basil I for His Son Leo VI," in *Concepts of Ideal Rulership from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. G. Roskam and S. Schorn, *Lectio* 7 (Turnhout, 2018), 355–82. For Byzantine mirrors of princes and the ideology of the elect nation, see K. D. S. Pidas, *Η δεματική των βυζαντινών "κατόπτρων" γηγενώνος" της πρώιμης και μέσης*

The third strategy of slight adaptations and omissions also contributed to the Christianization of the *Strategikos*'s general. For instance, Onasander advises placing brothers, friends, and lovers together in battle formations. While this was retained in the Byzantine paraphrase of Onasander, in the *Taktika* and in the *Sylloge tacticorum*, the reference to lovers conflicted with Christian morals and was excluded.⁴⁰ Pagan elements were equally problematic. Where the *Strategikos* has "the gods, kindly disposed, become comrades in arms to the soldiers," the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* adapts it to "God becomes favourable and a comrade of the army," releasing the tension of polytheism.⁴¹ Leo VI makes similar adjustments, arguing first that the general should pursue peace for God's sake and that soldiers, in a just war, wield "the shield of justice," and then reproducing Onasander's simile of the general as a ship captain. Despite Onasander having argued that one should entrust one's fate to "fortune," which was replaced by "God" in the *Taktika*,⁴² the simile was well received by Leo VI because it facilitated the idea that once all possible human effort had been made, one must put one's trust in the divine.

The final slight adaptation concerns Onasander's advice on the ethical conduct of war. Onasander urges generals to abstain from breaking treaties so as not to commit sacrilege. However, he also acknowledges that one ought to "suspect a breach of faith on the part of the enemy due to their hostility."⁴³ The author

of the *Sylloge tacticorum* draws on this concept but adapts it to both add a religio-moral dimension and update it to a tenth-century context. "On the part of the enemy dishonesty should be suspected because of barbarian morality," he argues, and it is highly likely that "barbarian morality" was meant to describe the practices of the Arabs, the empire's primary adversary.⁴⁴ The theme of Muslim bellicose mentality against Byzantium due to Islam prohibiting a lasting peace with Christians appears in Byzantine and Arab sources. Around 925–927, Theodore Daphnopates, a *patrikios* and *protasekretes* under Romanos I (r. 920–944), wrote a letter on behalf of the emperor, urging the Bulgarian Khan Symeon I (r. 893–927) to make peace. Daphnopates argues that since Symeon was a fellow Christian, he should embrace "peaceful and perpetual terms." He contrasts this with the behavior of "barbarians [Arabs . . .] who do not accept complete peace, even though they make truce and exchange prisoners, since they lack faith in the perfect religion."⁴⁵ The Muslim perspective is neatly described in the writings of al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (d. 974), a jurist in the Fatimid court of al-Mu'izz (r. 953–975), wherein he describes how the Byzantine offer of perpetual peace in 957/8 was rejected on religious grounds, as it did not agree with Muslim religious law, which mandates holy war against infidels and allows truces for only a limited time.⁴⁶

βυζαντινής περιόδου (398–1085): Συμβολή στην πολιτική θεωρία των Βυζαντινών (Athens, 2005), 31–39; and S. Eshel, *The Concept of the Elect Nation in Byzantium*, *The Medieval Mediterranean* 113 (Leiden, 2018).

40 *Onasandri strategicus* 2.4; Anon., *Paraphrase of Onasander* 33.261–62; Leo VI, *Taktika* 4.41; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 4.4.6. See also Dain, *Les manuscrits d'Onésandros*, 41.

41 *Onasandri strategicus* 4.186: θεοὶ συναγωνιστὰ τοῖς στρατεύουσιν εὐμενεῖς καθίστανται (trans. Oldfather and Oldfather, 391); Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.27: Θεὸς συναγωνιστὴς τοῖς στρατεύμασι καὶ εὐμενὴς καθίσταται (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 25).

42 *Onasandri strategicus* 4.202–4: τῇ τύχῃ (trans. Oldfather and Oldfather, 393); Leo VI, *Taktika* 20.169–70, 2.29–31: τοῦ δικαίου προσπύζοντες; τῷ Θεῷ (trans. Dennis, 35–37, 595–97). Alternatively, the first passage could also be translated as "become defenders of justice." See also Kourakes, "Συμβολή."

43 *Onasandri strategicus* 37.1025–26: παρὰ δὲ τοῖς πολεμίοις ὑπονοείσθω τὸ μὴ πιστὸν διὰ τὸ ἀπεχθές (trans. Oldfather and Oldfather, 495). For the breaking of truces and peace treaties and the concept of good faith in antiquity and late antiquity, see E. L. Wheeler, *Stratagem and*

the Vocabulary of Military Trickery (Leiden, 1988), 17, 24; and G. M. Reichberg, H. Syse, and E. Begby, eds., *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford, 2006), 47–59.

44 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 16.3: παρὰ δὲ τοῖς πολεμίοις ὑπονοείσθω τὸ μὴ πιστὸν διὰ τὸ τοῦ ἡθους βαρβαρικόν (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 35). For the morality of violating truces in the Byzantine context, see G. Chatzelis, "Stratagems and the Byzantine Culture of War: The Theory of Military Trickery and Ethics in Byzantium (c. 900–1204)." *BZ* 115 (2022): 719–68, at 741.

45 J. Darrouzès and L. G. Westerink, eds. and trans., *Théodore Daphnopatès correspondance* (Paris, 1978), 7.66–70: εἰρηνικὰς καὶ ἀδι-αλύτους συμβιβάσεις; βαρβάρων τῇ διαθέσει . . . οἵτινες καὶ ὅπως οὖν μεθ' ἡμῶν εἰρηνεύοντες καὶ ἀλλαγὴν αἰχμαλώτων ποιοῦντες, ὥς μὴ τελείας ὄντες πίστει, οὐδὲ τελείαν εἰρήνην ἀσπάζονται.

46 S. M. Stern, "An Embassy of the Byzantine Emperor to the Fatimid Caliph al-Mu'izz," *Byzantion* 20 (1950): 239–58, at 245–46, 254.

Fit for Purpose: Adapting and Modernizing the Roman General to Byzantine Cultural, Military, and Administrative Frames of Reference

Up to this point we have examined two key approaches that Byzantine military authors took vis-à-vis the *Strategikos*. The first involved an almost verbatim reproduction of Onasander's virtues of military leadership, while the second focused on christianizing the profile of the ideal general. In this section we will explore a third and final approach: the supplementing and enhancing of Onasander's ideal general with additional material from the classical tradition, earlier Byzantine military treatises, and original comments. The goal of this approach was to adapt and modernize the *Strategikos* so as to better reflect the cultural, military and administrative conditions of the empire. Two different methods were used toward this goal: presenting a more thorough treatment of values central to Byzantine military leadership that were covered only briefly or less comprehensively in the *Strategikos* and emphasizing elements and aspects of leadership entirely neglected by Onasander.

With regard to the second method, Leo VI includes righteousness, which, as noted above, is absent from the *Strategikos* among the core qualities of his ideal general. His aim is to provide original recommendations for more effective command and administration in the contemporary context. This original contribution was justifiable on the grounds that unlike the general of antiquity, Byzantine *strategoi* often served additional roles and were burdened with judicial and provincial administrative duties. As Leo VI notes, some Byzantine generals also administered a "province assigned" to them and oversaw "military, private and public matters."⁴⁷

The same line of thought is discernible by way of the first method too. With a view to highlighting the new duties of the *strategoi*, Leo VI expands Onasander's discussion on why the general ought to be free of avarice. The *strategos*, according to Leo VI, ought to be incorruptible and "make appointments to positions of command in his theme freely and on the

basis of virtue alone."⁴⁸ Until the middle of the tenth century, the *strategos* possessed supreme political, jurisdictional, and military authority in his theme, the district that he administered in the name of the emperor. He was therefore also responsible for promoting men within the provincial military or administrative bureaucracy and for judging cases. This advice of Leo VI may have been aimed at addressing the well-known issue of relationships of patronage and mutual interest playing a central role in Byzantine administration.⁴⁹ The author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* is also interested in expanding Onasander's recommendations against avarice. His strategy is to complement Onasander's advice with examples from the classical and the biblical traditions. He first fabricates a Roman Senate ordinance, a law with no historical basis, arguing that "it was an ordinance of the Roman senate never to call to power a money-loving and avaricious man."⁵⁰ Then he bolsters his message by

48 Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.8: δι' ἅρε τὴν μόνην δωρεὰν προβάλλεται τὰς ἀρχὰς τοῦ ὑπ' αὐτὸν θέματος (trans. Dennis, 19).

49 H. Glykatzis-Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire byzantine aux IX^e–XI^e siècles," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 84 (1960): 1–111, at 37–45; N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles* (Paris, 1972), 340–63; J. F. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565–1204* (London, 1999), 84, 148, 270–74; Haldon, *Critical Commentary*, 130–32; A. E. Gkoutzioukostas, *Η απονομή δικαιοσύνης στο Βυζάντιο (9ος–12ος αιώνας): Τα κοσμικά δικαιοδοτικά όργανα και δικαστήρια της πρωτεύουσας*, *Vyzantina keimena kai meletai* 37 (Thessaloniki, 2004), 37–65, 287–94; L. Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950–1100* (Cambridge, 2004); T. G. Kolias, "Zur Gerichtsbarkeit im byzantinischen Heer," in *Byzantina Mediterranea: Festschrift für J. Koder zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. K. Belke et al. (Vienna, 2007), 319–25, at 320–25; B. Krsmanović, *The Byzantine Province in Change: On the Threshold between the 10th and the 11th Century*, Institute for Byzantine Studies Monographs 37, Institute for Byzantine Research Monographs 14 (Belgrade and Athens, 2008), 13–14; L. Andriollo, *Constantinople et les provinces d'Asie mineure, IX^e–XI^e siècles: Administration impériale, sociétés locales et rôle de l'aristocratie*, Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, monographies 52 (Leuven, 2016), 41–71. See also K. Karaple, "Περὶ τοῦ οἶον εἶναι δεῖ τὸν στρατηγόν: Μία ἄλλη κατηγορία ηγεμονικῶν κατόπτρων," in *Aureus: Τόμος αφιερωμένος στον καθηγητὴ Εὐάγγελο Κ. Χρυσό*, ed. T. G. Kolias and K. G. Pitsakis (Athens, 2014), 297–310.

50 *Onasandri strategicus* 1.75–79, 2.125–30; Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.2.4: δόγμα δὲ ἦν παρὰ τῇ συγκλήτῳ Ῥωμαίων ἐρασιχρήματον καὶ φιλάργυρον ἄνδρα μὴ καλεῖσθαι ποτε εἰς ἀρχὴν (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 25); Chatzelis and Harris, *Sylloge tacticorum*, 121, n. 23. For another case of fabrication of authority, see Constantine VII, *Three Treatises of Imperial Military Expeditions* B.1–150, ed. and trans. J. F. Haldon, CFHB 28 (Vienna, 1990), 83–93; J. F. Haldon, "Introduction," *ibid.*, 35–76, at 45, where Constantine VII presents ninth-century

47 *Onasandri strategicus* 1.75–79, 2.125–30; Leo VI, *Taktika* 1.11, 2.8: τῆς κατ' αὐτὸν ἐπαρχίας τὰς διοικήσεις; ὅσαι τε στρατιωτικαὶ καὶ ὅσαι ἰδιωτικαὶ καὶ δημόσιοι (trans. Dennis, 15, 19); Haldon, *Critical Commentary*, 129–30. See also n. 50 below.

citing exemplary past figures renowned for their virtue and leadership. If the general wants to prove himself a worthy and beneficial military leader, he has to possess “the wisdom and judgment of Solomon, the strength of Samson and Hercules, the tactical experience of Cyrus and Alexander, and the fortune of Caesar.”⁵¹

Along with avarice, temperance features as another core virtue that Byzantine tacticians treat more thoroughly than Onasander. In the *Strategikos* we read that “the general must be temperate in order that he may not be so distracted by the pleasures of the body as to neglect consideration of matters of highest importance.”⁵² This statement is reproduced in both the *Taktika* and *Sylloge tacticorum*, but the author of the latter felt that this topic warranted further elaboration.⁵³ We have already discussed how this author adds a Christian dimension to this virtue by drawing on Basil I’s *Hortatory Chapters* and explaining that God favors those who resist passions, urges, and temptations.⁵⁴ What mainly concerns us here is his masterful combination of the Byzantine tradition with the classical one. Immediately after reproducing the above thesis, he enhances his argument with a statement by Aristippus of Cyrene, a fifth-century BC Greek philosopher: “He who prevails over pleasure, then, is not the one who refrains from it but the one who is not carried away by it even though he desires it. Just as, for instance, with the ship and the horse: [it is] not the man who does not desire them but the man who wants to travel somewhere.”⁵⁵ As this quote does not appear in any of Aristippus’s surviving works, the *Sylloge tacticorum*’s author most likely

practices as having been employed by Julius Caesar (d. 44 BCE) and Constantine the Great (r. 324–337). For a similar case in ecclesiastical texts, see A. Berger, “Believe It or Not: Authority in Religious Texts,” in *Authority in Byzantium*, ed. P. Armstrong (Farnham, UK, 2013), 247–58.

51 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.2.4: σοφίαν καὶ φρόνησιν Σολομῶντος, ῥώμην δὲ Σαμψώνος τε καὶ Ἡρακλέους, τακτικὴν δ’ ἐμπειρίαν καὶ δεξιότητα Κύρου καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου, τύχην δὲ Καίσαρος (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 25).

52 *Onasandri strategicus* 1.59–60: σώφρονα μέν, ἵνα μὴ ταῖς φυσικαῖς ἀνθελκόμενος ἡδοναῖς ἀπολείπῃ τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν μεγίστων φροντίδα (trans. Oldfather and Oldfather, 375).

53 Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.2.

54 See the section above and nn. 38–39.

55 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.7: Κρατεῖ δὲ ἡδονῆς οὐχ ὁ ἀπεχόμενος ἀλλ’ ὁ χρώμενος μέν, μὴ μέντοιγε παρασυρόμενος, ὥσπερ δὴ καὶ νεῶς καὶ ἵππου οὐχ ὁ μὴ χρώμενος, ἀλλ’ ὁ μετὰ γων ὅποι βούλεται (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 22 [modified]).

did not have firsthand knowledge of the philosopher’s work. Instead, it was probably copied from anthologies or florilegia, such as the fifth-century *Anthologion* of John Stobaeus or the late ninth-century *Corpus Parisinum*.⁵⁶ Kekaumenos elaborates on the importance of temperance in a different way. He argues that the generals ought to practice self-restraint “and not act arbitrarily or lose their tempers with anyone.” Leaders are expected to exemplify this virtue, as their behavior is closely observed by all. Excessive or undisciplined conduct will inevitably tarnish their reputation as capable commanders. To illustrate this point, Kekaumenos recounts how Basil Pediates, *katepano* of Sicily, spent some days in leisure playing dice, eclipsing his past achievements and receiving imperial disapproval. This behavior is clearly contrary to the very first advice Kekaumenos gives to military leaders: “Be alert night and day, and let your concern be how to win a victory over the foe.”⁵⁷

Save for the above reliance on Greek philosophy and near-contemporary examples, Byzantine tacticians also draw on Isocrates to supplement Onasander’s arguments. Of particular importance are Isocrates’ admonitory speeches *To Nicocles* and *To Demonicus*, offering guidance on leadership and decision-making, themes highly relevant to military commanders. The first is addressed to the Cypriot king Nicocles (ca. 374 BCE) as a guide on how to rule his people properly, while the second is addressed to Demonicus (ca. 374 BCE), the son of Isocrates’ friend Hipponicus, with a view to providing him with precepts on how to live his life best. For instance, Leo VI adds a passage from Isocrates to Onasander’s discussion that the general should choose a council to participate in his planning.⁵⁸ Though heavily reliant on Onasander, Leo VI supplements the instructions of the *Strategikos*

56 John Stobaeus, *Anthologion* 3.17.17, ed. O. Hense and C. Wachsmuth, 5 vols. (Berlin, 1884–1912); Anon., *Corpus Parisinum* 3.453. The florilegia or anthologies are collections of anecdotes and sayings attributed to famous figures of the classical and Christian traditions that enjoyed great popularity in the Byzantine world. For a general study of such works in Byzantium, see Searby’s introduction in his edition of *Corpus Parisinum* (n. 34 above), 1:1–112.

57 Katakalon Kekaumenos, *Consilia et narrationes* 9.0.4–7, 20.20–30, 98.16: καὶ μὴ αὐθαδῶς πράττειν ἢ μηνιᾶν τινί; ἀγρύπνησον καὶ τὰς νύκτας καὶ τὰς ἡμέρας καὶ ἔστω σοι μέριμνα ὅπως στήσεις κατὰ τοῦ ἔθνους (trans. Roueché).

58 *Onasandri strategicus* 3.171–74.

and incorporates Isocrates' remark, "take your time in making plans."⁵⁹

The greatest preference for Isocrates' speeches is demonstrated by the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum*. He found Isocrates' advice so valuable that he incorporates four statements by him in the discussion of the ideal Byzantine military leader. In some cases Isocrates' assertions are clear enough on their own to modernize and complement Onasander's ideal general, while in others Isocrates' arguments are combined with those of Onasander and with earlier Byzantine military manuals.

The first passage by Isocrates was added to supplement Onasander's brief comment that military leaders should be sharp-witted.⁶⁰ The author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* agrees that the general should be sharp-witted and cunning but further enhances this statement by drawing upon Isocrates' thesis that "one should remember things that have taken place and act with sagacity in the present so as to secure those events which will happen in the future."⁶¹ This idea is then nicely supplemented with one of Maurice's maxims, that "when the general knows the minds and abilities of his subordinates exactly, he firmly dispatches each one for pressing tasks." The author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* then reproduces Onasander's simile of the general as a wrestler, substantiating it with some examples of surprise attacks deriving from Maurice's *Strategikon* to make the point clearer.⁶² These additions imply that he wanted to emphasize the importance of mental acuity, particularly

in the tenth-century fluid context of guerrilla warfare and war of attrition on the eastern front, and to ground it with examples.⁶³

Similarly, the *Sylloge tacticorum* builds on Onasander's brief mention that a military leader ought to possess a firm spirit.⁶⁴ It emphasizes the importance of emotional resilience, adding to the discussion that the general should not "be puffed up in times of victory and likewise not be devastated in times of failure because the nature [of these things is] common and the future unpredictable. At any rate, the sufferings of the ancients should be a lesson to contemporaries" (hereafter I₂).⁶⁵ The concept of maintaining composure in both victory and defeat finds a clear parallel in Isocrates' orations. The rhetor advised Demonicus neither "to exult overmuch in prosperity, nor grieve overmuch in adversity" because "fate is common to all and the future is a thing unseen."⁶⁶ The adoption of this morale stance had important practical implications since it safeguarded the prosperity and effectiveness of the army. Byzantine historians often attributed Byzantine defeats to the deficiency or lack of emotional resilience. This is also the case for the Byzantine defeat in Sicily in 964, which is attributed to the general's overconfidence after his early victories.⁶⁷

Another aspect relatively neglected in the *Strategikos* but considered significant by the Byzantines is bravery. While Onasander acknowledges the occasional usefulness of bravery, he does not seem to consider it a defining characteristic of his ideal general

59 Isocrates, *To Demonicus* 34.3–4, ed. and trans. Brémond and Mathieu, *Isocrate: Discours*, 1:130, Eng. trans. Norlin and Van Hook, 1:25; Leo VI, *Taktika* 3.8, 4.4: βουλευέου μὲν βραδέως (trans. Dennis, 43, 49); and Haldon, *Critical Commentary*, 135–38.

60 *Onasandri strategicus* 1.70–71; Leo VI, *Taktika* 2.7.

61 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.14: Διὸ δεῖ μεμνήσθαι μὲν τῶν γεγενημένων, πράττειν δὲ μετ' ἀγχινοίας τὰ ἐνεστώτα, περὶ δὲ τῶν μελλόντων ἐξασφαλίζεσθαι (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 23); John Stobaeus, *Anthologion* 3.1.18: δεῖ τῶν μὲν προγεγενημένων μεμνήσθαι, τὰ δὲ ἐνεστώτα πράττειν, περὶ δὲ τῶν μελλόντων φυλάττεσθαι. I will refer to this statement hereafter as I₁ and to three others (see below) as I₂, I₃, and I₄.

62 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.14–18: ἄλλως τε καὶ ὁ τὴν ἐκάστου τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων ἀκριβῶς εἰδῶς καὶ φρόνησιν καὶ ὁρμὴν ἀσφαλῶς ἕκαστον ἐπὶ τὰς ἐπαιγούσας ἐκπέμπει χρείας (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 23–24); *Onasandri strategicus* 4.2.3.1151–54; and Maurice, *Strategikon* 8.2.71: Τὴν ἐκάστου ἄρχοντος καὶ στρατιώτου κίνησιν τε καὶ ὁρμὴν εἰδῶς στρατηγός, οἶδεν καλῶς ἐφ' ὅποιαν ἕκαστον πράξιν δεόντως ἀποστελεῖ, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis and E. Gamillscheg, CFHB 17 (Vienna, 1981), 293, Eng. trans. G. T. Dennis (Philadelphia, PA, 1984), 88.

63 For warfare in the time of the *Sylloge tacticorum*, see Haldon, *Warfare*, 34–46, 83–85, 176–81; K. A. Takirtakoglou, *H Ἀρμενία μετὰ τὴν Βυζαντίου καὶ Χαλιφάτου (885–929)* (Athens, 2018), 66–75; G. Theotokis, *Byzantine Military Tactics in Syria and Mesopotamia in the Tenth Century: A Comparative Study* (Edinburgh, 2018), 52–104, 219–35; Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals*, 12–23; and G. Chatzelis, "Byzantine Strategy (630–1204 CE)," in *The Cambridge History of Strategy*, ed. I. Duyvesteyn and B. Heuser, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2024), 1:225–49, at 236–37, 240–42.

64 *Onasandri strategicus* 2.154–55.

65 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.10: μήτε ἐπὶ ταῖς νίκαις μέγα φρονεῖν, μήθ' ὡσαύτως καταπίπτειν ἐν ταῖς δυσπραγαίαις· κοινὴ γὰρ ἡ φύσις καὶ τὸ μέλλον ἀόρατον· τῶν γούν παλαιτέρων τὰ πάθη τοῖς παροῦσιν ἔστω διδασκαλία (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 22).

66 Isocrates, *To Demonicus* 29.1–3, 42.1–2: Χαῖρε μὲν ἐπὶ τοῖς συμβαίνουσιν τῶν ἀγαθῶν, λυποῦ δὲ μετρίως ἐπὶ τοῖς γιγνομένοις τῶν κακῶν . . . κοινὴ γὰρ ἡ τύχη καὶ τὸ μέλλον ἀόρατον (trans. Norlin and Van Hook, 1:129, 132).

67 Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals*, 100–101.

since it does not appear among his key traits of military leadership.⁶⁸ In contrast, the *Taktika* of Leo VI and the *Sylloge tacticorum* both explicitly regard bravery as a core trait for the general.⁶⁹ The author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* draws upon Isocrates to corroborate his thinking, arguing that the general should be “brave because, while it is by all means advantageous to attempt to live safely, when danger is expected one should seek safety in battle. For death is common to all mankind, but to die gloriously is a characteristic of the great” (hereafter I3).⁷⁰ This shift in perspective likely stemmed from a confluence of historical and cultural factors. The tenth-century rise of wealthy military families in Asia Minor, successful in war, fostered a climate glorifying bravery and battlefield prowess.⁷¹ This glorification was further solidified by the emergence of literature praising these families’ generals. Military officials from prominent aristocratic families, such as the Kourkouai and the Phokades, were presented in an ideal light,

68 *Onasandri strategicus* 33.928–38.

69 Cf. Leo VI, *Taktika* 1.11, 14.19, 20.190.

70 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.11: Ἀνδρείον δέ, ἐπεὶ δὴ τὸ μετ’ ἀσφαλείας πειρᾶσθαι ζῆν καὶ πάνυ λυσitelés, κινδύνου δὲ προκειμένου τὴν ἐκ τοῦ πολέμου δεῖ σωτηρίαν ἐπιζητεῖν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ θανεῖν κατὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐστὶ, τὸ δὲ καὶ σὺν εὐκλείᾳ τῶν σπουδαίων ἴδιον (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 22–23); Isocrates, *To Demonicus* 43.1–9: Μᾶλλον εὐλαβοῦ ψόγον ἢ κίνδυνον· δεῖ γὰρ εἶναι φοβεράν τοῖς μὲν φαύλοις τὴν τοῦ βίου τελευτὴν, τοῖς δὲ σπουδαίοις τὴν ἐν τῷ ζῆν ἀδοξίαν. Μάλιστα μὲν πειρᾶ ζῆν κατὰ τὴν ἀσφάλειαν· ἐὰν δὲ ποτέ σοι συμβῇ κινδυνεύειν, ζῆται τὴν ἐκ τοῦ πολέμου σωτηρίαν μετὰ καλῆς δόξης, ἀλλὰ μὴ μετ’ αἰσχρᾶς φήμης· τὸ μὲν γὰρ τελευτῆσαι πάντων ἡ πεπωμένη κατέκρινεν, τὸ δὲ καλῶς ἀποθανεῖν ἴδιον τοῖς σπουδαίοις ἀπένειμεν (trans. Norlin and L. Van Hook, 1:31).

71 See, for example, J.-C. Cheynet, “The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th to 13th Centuries),” repr. in J. C. Cheynet, *The Byzantine Aristocracy and Its Military Function*, trans. J. Lefort (Aldershot, UK, 2006), 1–43, at 31–32, 37–38; J. A. Munitiz, “War and Peace Reflected in Some Byzantine Mirrors of Princes,” in *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis, S.J.*, ed. T. S. Miller and J. S. Nesbitt (Washington, DC, 1995), 50–61; J. Haldon, “Provincial Elites, Central Authorities: Problems in Fiscal and Military Management in the Byzantine State,” in *The Province Strikes Back: Imperial Dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. B. Forsén and G. Salmeri (Helsinki, 2008), 157–85, at 165–69, 172–76; L. Andriollo, “Aristocracy and Literary Production in the 10th Century,” in *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: Modes, Functions, and Identities*, ed. A. Pizzone, *ByzArch* 28 (Berlin, 2014), 119–38; Andriollo, *Constantinople*, 355–80; F. R. Trombley and S. Tougher, “The Emperor at War: Duties and Ideals,” in *The Emperor in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Forty-seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. S. Tougher, SPBS 21 (New York, 2019), 179–95; and Chatzelis, “Stratagems,” 744–63.

eulogized for their strategic prudence as well as their heroic ideals, bravery, prowess in arms, hand-to-hand fighting, and willingness to die in battle.⁷² To be sure, these ideals were neither new nor Byzantine per se, it was just that the tenth and eleventh centuries provided a fruitful background for them to reemerge and become mainstream again. When this time came, these ideals were expressed in accordance with the classical past. Byzantine historians expressed them through allusions to Homer, Polybius, Plutarch, and Isocrates.⁷³

72 For the extensive literature on this subject, see, among others, S. McGrath, “The Battles of Dorostolon (971): Rhetoric and Reality,” in Miller and Nesbitt, *Peace and War in Byzantium*, 152–64, at 156–59; S. McGrath, “Warfare as Literary Narrative,” in *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, ca. 300–1204*, ed. Y. Stouraitis, Brill’s Companions to the Byzantine World 3 (Leiden, 2018), 160–95; T. Maniati-Kokkini, “Ἡ ἐπιδείξη ἀνδρείας στον πόλεμο κατὰ τους ιστορικούς του 10ου καὶ 11ου αἰώνα,” in *Το εμπόλεμο Βυζάντιο (905–1205 αι.)*, ed. K. Tsiknakis, Diethne Symposia 4 (Athens, 1997), 239–59; A. Markopoulos, “From Narrative Historiography to Historical Biography: New Trends in Byzantine Historical Writing in the 10th–11th Centuries,” *BZ* 102 (2009): 697–715; L. A. Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: The Material for History of Nikephoros Bryennios* (New York, 2012), 89–103, 121–38; K. J. Sinclair, “War Writing in Middle Byzantine Historiography: Sources, Influences and Trends” (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2012), 268–69; R.-J. Lilie, “Reality and Invention: Reflections on Byzantine Historiography,” *DOP* 68 (2014): 157–210; A. Kaldellis, “The Manufacture of History in the Later Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Rhetorical Templates and Narrative Ontologies,” in *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Belgrade, 22–27 August 2016): Plenary Papers*, ed. S. Marjanović-Dušanić (Belgrade, 2016), 293–306; J. Shepard, “Memoirs as Manifesto: The Rhetoric of Katakalan Kekaumenos,” in *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*, ed. T. Shawcross and I. Toth (Cambridge, 2018), 185–214; P. Frankopan, “Aristocratic Family Narratives in Twelfth-Century Byzantium,” in *ibid.*, 317–35; Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals*, 293–308.

73 For the use of these authors in Byzantine historiography, see R. J. H. Jenkins, “The Classical Background of the *Scriptores Post Theophanem*,” *DOP* 8 (1954): 11–30; Neville, *Heroes and Romans*, 2–27; Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 74; A. Kaldellis, “The Original Source for Tzimiskes’ Balkan Campaign (971 AD) and the Emperor’s Classicizing Propaganda,” *BMGS* 37 (2013): 35–52, at 45–48. For broader remarks on imitation in Byzantine historical narratives, see G. Moravcsik, “Klassizismus in der byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung,” in *Polychronion: Festschrift Franz Dögler zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. P. Wirth (Heidelberg, 1966), 366–77; Scott, “Classical Tradition in Byzantine Historiography,” in Mullett and Scott, *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, 61–74; D. R. Reinsch, “Der Autor ist tot—es lebe der Leser: Zur Neubewertung der imitatio in der byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung,” in Schiffer and Rhooy, *Imitatio-Aemulatio-Variatio*, 23–32.

The final passage of Isocrates is employed by the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* to enhance Onasander's discussion of the general's attitude toward just war. While the idea of the correlation between divine favor and just war existed among Greeks and Romans, Onasander stands out as the first military author to explicitly discuss the concept. He argues that gods and soldiers eagerly contributed to the cause only if war was fought for a just cause, not initiating aggression.⁷⁴ Roman history was steeped in the concept of *bellum iustum*. Roman consuls, emperors, scholars, and orators frequently employed propaganda to portray Rome as a defensive and reluctant participant in war.⁷⁵ The concept of just war remained powerful in Byzantium, simultaneously providing legitimacy and influencing decision-making.⁷⁶ Consequently, the author of *Sylloge tacticorum* not merely reproduces Onasander's views on this subject but also solidifies the discussion by incorporating Isocrates' advice to Nicocles: "Be warlike in knowledge and preparations, but also peaceful, as long as this does not outweigh in any way the observation of duty" (hereafter I4).⁷⁷ These ideas of both Isocrates and Onasander are thoroughly compatible with the Byzantine war ethic and very much in line with the Byzantine ideal of the peace-loving emperor or military leader who aims at and fights for peace but is not negligent in the defense of the empire.⁷⁸ This concept was born, on the one hand, from the wide acceptance

of the views of Basil of Caesarea that killing in a defensive war to protect Christian lives and faith was justified;⁷⁹ and, on the other, from the perception that the Byzantines were God's chosen people.⁸⁰ Divine support was expected when fighting a just defensive war. Interestingly, even wars aimed at reclaiming lost Roman territory were regarded as defensive actions, reflecting the blurred lines between defense and restoration in the Byzantine worldview.⁸¹

With both the authors of the *Taktika* and the *Sylloge tacticorum* having relied on Isocrates to supplement and adapt the profile of their ideal general, it is logical to wonder whether they had direct access to Isocrates' speeches. A closer look at their passages demonstrates that the majority was not directly copied from Isocrates. As regards the *Taktika*, it seems that all of Isocrates' passages were copied from earlier Byzantine sources, such as the *Strategikon* of Maurice.⁸² The case of the *Sylloge tacticorum* is a little more complicated. The above statement (I1), "one should remember things that have taken place and act with sagacity in the present so as to secure those events which will happen in the future," was most probably copied from Byzantine florilegia, since this precept is not preserved in any extant work of Isocrates; it is only attributed to Isocrates by Byzantine anthologists. Judging from the wording of the *Sylloge tacticorum*, the most likely extant source of the passage is the *Corpus Parisinum*.⁸³ The third statement about bravery and a glorious death on the battlefield (I3) features in both the original works of Isocrates and in florilegia almost verbatim. Nonetheless, the version in the *Sylloge tacticorum* does not bear a very close resemblance to either. The last section is closer to

74 Onasandri *strategicus* 4.

75 Chlup, "Just War in Onasander," 37–51; Chiritoiu, "Commanding Texts," 165–211.

76 For a discussion of the relationship between just war (*jus ad bellum*) and just conduct of war (*jus in bello*) in Byzantium, see Chatzelis, "Stratagems," 763–68.

77 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.28: Πολεμικὸν μὲν γὰρ εἶναι δεῖ τὸν στρατηγὸν ταῖς ἐπιστήμαις καὶ ταῖς παρασκευαῖς, εἰρηνικὸν δὲ τῷ μηδὲν παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον πλεονεκτεῖν (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 25); Isocrates, *To Nicocles* 2.4–6: Πολεμικὸς μὲν ἴσθι ταῖς ἐπιστήμαις καὶ ταῖς παρασκευαῖς, εἰρηνικὸς δὲ τῷ μηδὲν παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον πλεονεκτεῖν (trans. Norlin and Van Hook, 1:55).

78 See Trombley and Tougher, "Emperor at War"; J. Koder and I. Stouraitis, "Byzantine Approaches to Warfare (6th–12th Centuries): An Introduction," in *Byzantine War Ideology between Roman Imperial Concept and Christian Religion: Akten des Internationalen Symposiums (Wien, 19.–21. Mai 2011)*, ed. J. Koder and I. Stouraitis, Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung 30 (Vienna, 2012), 9–15; Y. Stouraitis, "State War Ethic and Popular Views on Warfare," in Stouraitis, *Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War*, 59–91, and I. Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden in der politischen und ideologischen Wahrnehmung in Byzanz (7.–11. Jahrhundert)* (Vienna, 2009), 189–327.

79 J. A. McGuckin, "A Conflicted Heritage: The Byzantine Religious Establishment of a War Ethic," *DOP* 65/66 (2011–12): 29–44; and R. S. Nelson, "And So, With the Help of God: The Byzantine Art of War in the Tenth Century," *DOP* 65/66 (2011–12): 169–92.

80 Eshel, *Concept of the Elect Nation*.

81 See H. Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris, 1975), 9–74; Haldon, *Warfare*, 13–33; Stouraitis, *Krieg und Frieden*, 190–376; I. Stouraitis, "Just War' and 'Holy War' in the Middle Ages: Rethinking Theory through the Byzantine Case-Study," *JÖB* 62 (2012): 227–64; Stouraitis, "State War Ethic"; and P. Stephenson, "The Imperial Theology of Victory," in Stouraitis, *Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War*, 23–58.

82 Maurice, *Strategikon* 8.15; Haldon, *Critical Commentary*, 137, 421.

83 Anon., *Corpus Parisinum* 6.66: Δεῖ τὸν ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα μεμνήσθαι μὲν τῶν γεγενημένων, πράττειν δὲ τὰ ἐνεστώτα, περὶ δὲ τῶν μελλόντων ἀσφαλίζεισθαι.

the original text of Isocrates than to John Stobaeus, for example, who adds the word “nature” (φύσις). It is possible that the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* copied this passage from a nonextant *florilegium* or that he freely adapted it from Isocrates.⁸⁴ The fourth statement about the balance between a peaceful and bellicose disposition (I4) could have been copied directly from Isocrates since it does not seem to be part of any extant Byzantine *anthologion*. One cannot exclude the possibility, however, that the passage belonged to a non-extant *florilegium*. Finally, the second statement (I2), about maintaining composure in victory and defeat, (I2) seems to have been crafted drawing on a combination of sources. Although its first part (“not to be puffed up . . . failure”) features in the original text of Isocrates’ *To Demonicus*, and its essence is also found in Isocrates’ *Panathenaikos*, in Byzantine florilegia, as well as in the *Hortatory Chapters* of Basil I, the wording of the *Sylloge tacticorum* differs from all these versions⁸⁵—its closest extant version probably features in the maxims of Maurice’s *Strategikon*.⁸⁶ The surviving sources with the most similar wording for the second part of I2 (“because the nature . . . contemporaries”) seems to be Basil I’s *Hortatory Chapters*. The latter not only concludes with the same advice that one should learn from the ancients, but also, much like the *Sylloge tacticorum*, reads “the nature [of these things] is common” (κοινή γὰρ ἡ φύσις) instead of Isocrates’ original “fate is common” (κοινή γὰρ ἡ τύχη).⁸⁷ These observations could

imply that the author of *Sylloge tacticorum* drafted I2 by drawing either on a combination of extant sources or on a nonextant source that was common to both him and Basil I.

Reflections on Military Manuals and on Tradition and Originality

The above analysis of Byzantine adaptations of the ideal general offers fruitful ground for further reflection on Byzantine military manuals and their authors.

The first point for consideration is the great reliance of the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* on florilegia and Isocrates. Isocrates’ admonitory speeches and the florilegia were commonly utilized by students of the progymnasmata.⁸⁸ This introductory rhetoric course focused on the fundamentals of literary composition and involved exercises such as paraphrasing and elaborating maxims and anecdotes. The florilegia served as a vital resource for students, offering a pool of suitable material to practice with. This correlation suggests that the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* may have received similar rhetorical training. He might have drawn upon the sources he encountered during his studies, incorporating them into his military manual. To strengthen this argument, we should examine the *Sylloge tacticorum* for evidence of the methods of the progymnasmata employed by its author.

Before proceeding, however, it will be helpful to take into account Charlotte Roueché’s insightful findings on Katakalon Kekaumenos’s familiarity with the progymnasmata and the impact of the latter on the composition of the *Consilia et narrationes*. Roueché has demonstrated that part of the *Consilia et narrationes* was drafted based on exercises in composing and elaborating a narrative (*diegema*), anecdote (*chreia*), and maxim (*gnome*). In addition, Roueché argues that Kekaumenos primarily draws his gnomic advice from florilegia, with a smaller portion seemingly his own original creation.⁸⁹

84 John Stobaeus, *Anthologion* 4.10.29: Μᾶλλον εὐλαβοῦ ψόγον ἢ κίνδυνον. δεῖ γὰρ εἶναι τοῖς μὲν φαύλοις φοβεράν τὴν τοῦ βίου τελευτήν, τοῖς δὲ σπουδαίοις τὴν ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἀδοξίαν. <μάλιστα μὲν πειρῶ ζῆν κατὰ τὴν ἀσφάλειαν> ἐὰν δὲ ποτὲ σοι συμβῇ κινδυνεύειν, ζῆται τὴν ἐκ τοῦ πολέμου σωτηρίαν μετὰ καλῆς δόξης, ἀλλὰ μὴ μετ’ αἰσχροῦς φήμης. τὸ μὲν γὰρ τελευτῆσαι πάντων ἢ πεπωμένῃ κατέκρινεν, τὸ δὲ καλῶς ἀποθανεῖν ἴδιον τοῖς σπουδαίοις ἢ φύσις ἀπένειμεν; and see n. 61 above.

85 See Isocrates, *Panathenaikos* 31.5–8, ed. and trans. Brémond and Mathieu, *Isocrate: Discours*, 4:95, Eng. trans. Norlin, 2:367–68; John Stobaeus, *Anthologion* 3.1.16.11–14; Anon., *Corpus Parisinum* 4.3.14–16; Basil I, *Hortatory Chapters* 1.65.1–2: Ἐπὶ νίκαις ὑπεναντίων μηδέποτε ἐπαρθῆς μηδὲ ἐπὶ πολεμίων συμφοραῖς γαυρίαμα κτήση. The text of Isocrates and of the florilegia reads ἔτι τοὺς τῶν μὲν ἡδονῶν αἰεὶ κρατοῦντας, τῶν δὲ συμφορῶν μὴ λίαν ἡττωμένους, ἀλλ’ ἀνδρωδῶς ἐν αὐταῖς διακειμένους καὶ τῆς φύσεως ἀξίως ἢς μετέχοντες τυγχάνομεν. Cf. nn. 38 and 39 above and n. 87 below.

86 Maurice, *Strategikon* 8.1.5: Τὸ μῆτε ἐπαίρεσθαι ἐν ταῖς ἐπιτυχίαις, μῆτε καταπίπτειν ἐν ταῖς δυσκολαῖς ἐρρωμένου ἐστὶ λογισμοῦ.

87 Basil I, *Hortatory Chapters* 1.65: Ἐπὶ νίκαις ὑπεναντίων μηδέποτε ἐπαρθῆς μηδὲ ἐπὶ πολεμίων συμφοραῖς γαυρίαμα κτήση . . . κοινή γὰρ ἡ φύσις καὶ τὸ μέλλον ἄρατον. ὅρα οὖν τοὺς πρὸ σοῦ καὶ τότε μαθήσῃ τὰ μετὰ

σέ. πολλὰ γὰρ οἶδεν ὁ βίος πράγματα ἀμειβεῖν καὶ τῶν παρελθόντων τὰ πάθη τοῖς νῦν παρούσιν ὑπάρχει διδασκαλία). See also nn. 65 and 66 above.

88 Markopoulos, “Autour des Chapitres parénétiques,” 472–73; and C. Roueché, “The Rhetoric of Kekaumenos,” in *Rhetoric in Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College, University of Oxford, March 2001*, ed. E. Jeffreys, SPBS 11 (Aldershot, 2003), 23–37, at 30–31.

89 Roueché, “Rhetoric of Kekaumenos,” 26–27, 31–37; Roueché, “Literary Background of Kekaumenos”; C. Roueché, “The Place of

In this, the *Sylloge tacticorum* displays many similarities with the *Consilia et narrationes*. The author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* demonstrably relies on florilegia for some moral precepts, whereas others he invents from scratch. In addition, certain passages suggest familiarity with rhetorical composition as they appear to follow the structure proposed in the exercises of the progymnasmata. In his *Progymnasmata*, Pseudo-Hermogenes outlines a method for elaborating anecdotes and maxims that include the following parts, among others: paraphrase, explanation, contrast, comparison, and example.⁹⁰ This framework appears to be partly reflected in how the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* organizes and structures his chapter on the qualities of the ideal general, where most of the moralizing material is featured. It appears that he attempts to follow the advice of Pseudo-Hermogenes both when he incorporates passages from other sources and when he adds his own comments alongside the borrowed material. For instance, in chapter 1.5 we observe a statement (“Fair”), followed by a free paraphrase of Isocrates (“because the general must bring himself forward as the standard for his subordinates”), then a contrasting statement (“if he does not . . . never be able to become free of this”), and, finally, the explanation (“For not punishing those who act unjustly is the same as being unjust . . . judged by God with the same measure as those who are unjust”).⁹¹ Similarly, chapter 1.7 displays a statement (“Prudent”), a paraphrase of Onasander (“so that he might not abandon his devotion to the most important things by being drawn to physical pleasures”), followed by explanation and contrast (“Besides, because the time at which God provides us with trophies and victories against the enemy is . . . not the one who refrains from it but he who is not carried away by it despite the fact

that he desires it”), and concluding with a comparison (“Just as for instance with the ship . . . he who wants to travel somewhere”).⁹² Chapter 1.13–18 provides another example, with a statement (“In addition . . . sharp-witted”), followed by paraphrases of Maurice, Isocrates, and Onasander, including his comparison between the general and the wrestler (“as it is safe and advantageous to prevail over the enemy by design and intelligence or subtlety . . . generals become distinguished by keeping this in mind”), then by an explanation (“This becomes possible if attacks against the enemy are made cunningly and unexpectedly . . . against those [forces] which are much superior in size”), and, finally, by examples (“For some generals, after receiving envoys . . . quickly obtained victory when they have suddenly appeared against the enemy, after a bridge has been built there and the army has safely crossed over it”).⁹³

Further exposure to the techniques of the progymnasmata is suggested by the way the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* paraphrases anecdotes. In the *Progymnasmata* of Aelius Theon, we read of certain standard expressions that allowed the student to paraphrase an anecdote and to practice inflection. To practice the accusative, Aelius Theon proposes adding either “they say, or it is said.”⁹⁴ The author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* seems to have implemented this advice when paraphrasing a stratagem from Polyaeus concerning Persian women. He begins writing in the nominative case and then shifts to the accusative with the addition

Kekaumenos in the Admonitory Tradition,” in Odorico, “*L’éducation au gouvernement et à la vie*,” 129–44.

90 Pseudo-Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 3.6–10, 4.7–10, ed. and trans. M. Patillon, *Corpus rhetoricum*, Collection des universités de France 460, 470, 485, 491, 507, 5 vols. (Paris, 2008–14), 1:186–89, Eng. trans. Kennedy, in *Progymnasmata*, 76–78. Similar instructions were given by Aphthonios, *Progymnasmata*, 3., 4., ed. and trans. M. Patillon *Corpus rhetoricum*, vol. 1 (Paris, 2008), 114–20.

91 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.5: statement: Δίκαιον δέ; paraphrase: ὅτι κανόνα χρῆ τοῖς ὑπηκόοις ἑαυτὸν προτιθέναι τὸν στρατηγόν; contrasting statement: οὐκ ἂν . . . ποτὲ μὴ τούτου γ’ αὐτὸς ἐλευθερός καθεστώς; explanation: Ἴσον δὲ τῷ ἀδικεῖν ἐστὶ τὸ μὴ κωλύειν τοὺς ἀδικούντας . . . τῆς ἴσης καὶ οὗτος ἐκείνοις μοίρας παρὰ Θεῷ κρίνεται (trans. Chatzeli and Harris, 22).

92 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.7: statement: Σώφρονα δέ; paraphrase: ἵνα μὴ ταῖς φυσικαῖς ἀνθελκόμενος ἡδοναῖς τὴν περὶ τῶν μεγίστων ἀπολείπει φροντίδα; explanation: ἄλλως τε καὶ ὅτι τότε νίκας ἡμῖν κατ’ ἐχθρῶν καὶ τρόπαια παρέχει Θεός . . . ὁρατούς; contrast: οὐχ ὁ ἀπεχόμενος ἄλλ’ ὁ χρώμενος μὲν, μὴ μέντοιγε παρασυρόμενος; comparison: ὥσπερ δὴ καὶ νεῶς . . . ὁ μετὰ γων ὅποι βούλεται (trans. Chatzeli and Harris, 22).

93 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 1.13–18: statement: Ἐπὶ τούτοις . . . ὁξύν; paraphrase with comparison: ἐπειδὴ βουλὴ μᾶλλον καὶ ἀγχινοῖα εἶτ’ οὖν περινοῖα τῶν ἐχθρῶν κρατεῖν ἀσφαλές ἐστὶ καὶ ὠφέλιμον . . . στρατηγῶν φυλάττοντες εὐδοκιμοῦσι; explanation: Τοῦτο δὲ γίνεσθαι δυνατόν ἐάν σεσοφισμένως καὶ ἀθρόον αἰ κατὰ τῶν ἐχθρῶν γίνονται ἐπελεύσεις . . . πρὸς τὰς πολὺ προφερούσας τῷ πλήθει; examples: Οἱ μὲν γὰρ πρεσβείας παρὰ τῶν ἐχθρῶν δεξάμενοι . . . γεφύρας δὲ ἐνταυθοῖ συμπαγείσης καὶ τοῦ στρατοῦ διαβάλλοντες ἐπ’ αὐτῆς ἀσφαλῶς ἀφνω τοῖς ἐχθροῖς ἐπισφρήσαντες τὴν νικῶσαν εὐθὺς ἀπενέγκαντο (trans. Chatzeli and Harris, 23–24).

94 Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata* 102.30–34: τὸ φασί, τὸ λέγεται (trans. Kennedy, 22–23).

of “they say.”⁹⁵ This specific wording is absent from other surviving versions of the stratagem. Based on this observation and his practice of elaboration discussed above, it is plausible that the shift in grammatical case with the addition of “they say” originated with the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum*, suggesting his familiarity with the progymnasmata.⁹⁶

The second issue for consideration stems from our above discussion and regards the literary layers of military manuals and whether they could be appreciated by their intended readership. Military treatises conveyed ideals of military leadership to their readers through various masterful and creative imitations, adaptations, elaborations, and paraphrases. Could all these elements be fully appreciated by the aristocracy? As far as the civil aristocracy is concerned, many of its members were scholars, with their own libraries and archives, and participants in an extensive network of other highly educated courtiers. There is little doubt that most of the civil aristocracy would easily have recognized and appreciated the literary elements of military manuals, since a proper classicizing education was essentially a prerequisite for the holding of civil offices.⁹⁷ With regard to the

military aristocracy, an examination of available sources reveals considerable variation in their educational backgrounds. At one end of the spectrum, officials lacked the ambition to invest in education for personal and professional development. This group likely possessed no or minimal literary schooling, hindering its ability to benefit from military literature let alone to appreciate its nuances. The strategos of Lucania (1042), Eustathios Skepides, who could barely write his name and title, was probably such a man.⁹⁸ Conversely, the middle or other end of the spectrum boasted individuals with a moderate or even strong literary background, allowing them to grasp and appreciate the various literary elements of military manuals. These men actively pursued education and literary endeavors, partly motivated by peer competition and Byzantine cultural conventions.⁹⁹ Some commissioned manuscripts that contained both military and Christian texts.¹⁰⁰ Others presented themselves as well-rounded leaders producing admonitory and military literature that adhered to the literary conventions of their time, such as Katakalon Kekaumenos and the author of *Sylloge tacticorum*. Foremost in this group were Nikephoros Ouranos,¹⁰¹ John Geometres,¹⁰² and

95 Pseudo-Leo VI, *Sylloge tacticorum* 86.2: Τούτοις φασὶ τοῖς λόγοις (trans. Chatzelis and Harris, 106).

96 Different versions of this stratagem are also found in Plutarch, *Bravery of Women* 5, ed. and trans. F. C. Babbitt et al., *Plutarch's Moralia*, Loeb 245, 17 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1927–2004), 3:491–93; Anon., *Hypotheseis* 14.24, ed. J. Melber, *Polyaeni strategematon libri octo ex recensione Eduard Woelfflin* (Leipzig, 1887), Eng. trans. P. Krentz and E. Wheeler, *Stratagems of War*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1994), 2:893; and Anon., *Strategemata Ambrosiana* 14.17, ed. J.-A. de Foucault (Paris, 1949). For the *Corpus perditum*, see A. Dain, *Le Corpus Perditum* (Paris, 1939); and L. Mecella, “Die Überlieferung der Kestoi des Julius Africanus in den byzantinischen Textsammlungen zur Militärtechnik,” in *Die Kestoi des Julius Africanus und ihre Überlieferung*, ed. M. Wallraff and L. Mecella, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 165 (Berlin, 2009), 84–144, at 107–13. It is impossible to know for certain whether this particular stratagem was included in the *Corpus perditum* and in what form.

97 For a discussion of military manuals being of interest to the civil aristocracy and for the relationship between authority and literacy, see C. Holmes, “Byzantine Political Culture and Compilation Literature in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Some Preliminary Inquiries,” *DOP* 64 (2010): 55–80; C. Holmes, “Political Literacy,” in *The Byzantine World*, ed. P. Stephenson, The Routledge Worlds 10 (New York, 2010), 137–48; C. Whately, “The Genre and Purpose of Military Manuals in Late Antiquity,” in *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity*, ed. G. Greatrex and H. Elton (New York, 2016), 249–61; Williams, “The Blind Leading the Blind?”; Chatzelis, “Imperial

Office and Education,” 191–208; Chatzelis, “Wars and Cultural Wars,” 264–72; Chatzelis, “Byzantine Education and Military Manuals.” The library of Eustathios Boilas sheds light on what the provincial aristocracy read; see S. J. Vryonis, “The Will of a Provincial Magnate, Eustathios Boilas (1059),” *DOP* 11 (1957): 263–77, at 269–70; Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 15–63.

98 For Eustathios Skepides and uneducated military personnel, see G. Cavallo, *Η ανάγνωση στο Βυζάντιο*, trans. S. Tsochandaridou and P. Odorico (Athens, 2008), 38–39.

99 For military men and literary production, see Browning, “Literacy,” 39–44; McGeer, *Byzantine Warfare*, 191–94; Haldon, *Warfare*, 270–74; Holmes, “Byzantine Political Culture”; Shepard, “Memoirs as Manifesto”; and Chatzelis, “Wars and Cultural Wars,” 264–72. See also Cavallo, *Η ανάγνωση στο Βυζάντιο*, 125–45; F. Bernard, “The Ethics of Authorship: Some Tensions in the 11th Century,” in Pizzzone, *Author in Middle Byzantine Literature*, 41–60, at 46–48.

100 Browning, “Literacy,” 43; and Mazzucchi, “Dagli anni di Basilio Parakimomenos.”

101 For Nikephoros Ouranos, see his *Correspondence* 22, 35, 46, ed. J. Darrouzès, *Épistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle*, AOC 6 (Paris, 1960); D. A. Christidis, “Μια ανάμνηση από τον Καλλίμαχο σε επιστολή του Νικηφόρου Ουρανού,” *Ελληνικά* 35 (1984): 380–82; and Trombley, “*Taktika* of Nikephoros Ouranos.”

102 For John Geometres, see M. D. Lauxtermann, “John Geometres: Poet and Soldier,” *Byzantion* 68.2 (1998): 356–80; M. D. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts*, WByzSt 2.4.1–2, 2 vols. (Vienna, 2003–19), 1:35–41, 68–69,

Nikephoros Bryennios.¹⁰³ These men corresponded with prominent scholars and authored diverse literary works, rhetorical, poetic, and religious. They were well acquainted with the *trivium* and the *quadrivium* and were celebrated for their mastery of high-register Greek.

Finally, the last matter that requires special attention is how the reshaping of the ideal Roman general into a Byzantine one fits within scholarly debates on tradition and originality in Byzantine literature. As is mostly evident in the first Byzantine approach to Onasander's *Strategikos*, Byzantine military authors drew heavily on the work, reproducing many of Onasander's leadership qualities, comments, and suggestions nearly verbatim into their own military manuals. However, I do not think that this phenomenon confirms the dismissive arguments of past scholarship about Byzantine adherence to classical models as being rigid and slavish.¹⁰⁴

116–19, 146–308, 2:58–69, 75–76, 79–81, 99–102, 129–36, 158–70, 180–87, 194–96; A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850–1000)*, ed. C. Angelidi (Athens, 2006), 249–72; Andriollo, “Aristocracy and Literary Production,” 136–38; E. M. van Opstall, trans., *Poèmes en hexamètres et en distiques élégiaques*, *The Medieval Mediterranean* 75 (Leiden, 2008), 3–121; E. M. van Opstall, “Verses on Paper, Verses Inscribed? A Case Study with Epigrams of John Geometres,” in *Die kulturhistorische Bedeutung byzantinischer Epigramme: Akten des internationalen Workshop (Wien, 1.–2. Dezember 2006)*, ed. W. Hörandner and A. Rhoby, Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung 14 (Vienna, 2008), 55–60; E. M. van Opstall and M. Tomadaki, “John Geometres: A Poet around the Year 1000,” in *A Companion to Byzantine Poetry*, ed. W. Hörandner, A. Rhoby, and N. Zagklas, Brill's Companions to the Byzantine World 4 (Leiden, 2019), 191–211; M. Tomadaki, “Ἰωάννης Γεωμέτρης, Ἰαμβικά Ποιήματα” (PhD diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2014), 1–40; M. Tomadaki, “The Reception of Ancient Greek Literature in the Iambic Poems of John Geometres,” in *Middle and Late Byzantine Poetry: Texts and Contexts*, ed. A. Rhoby and N. Zagklas, Byzantios: Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization 14 (Turnhout, 2018), 73–95. Cf. P. Magdalino, “The Liturgical Poetics of an Elite Religious Confraternity,” in Shawcross and Toth, *Reading in the Byzantine Empire*, 116–32; and S. Papaioannou, “Ioannes Sikeliotēs (and Ioannes Geometres) Revisited: With an Appendix: Edition of Sikeliotēs' Scholia on Aelius Aristides,” *TM* 23 (2019): 659–92.

103 For Nikephoros Bryennios, see E. M. Jeffreys, “Nikephoros Bryennios Reconsidered,” in Vlyssidou, *Empire in Crisis (?)*, 201–14; and Neville, *Heroes and Romans*.

104 H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1978), 2:324–25; and C. Mango, *Byzantine Literature as a Distorting Mirror: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on 21 May 1974* (Oxford, 1975), 16–18. For a recent discussion of such issues with a special focus on military manuals, see Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals*, 72–84, 88–98; Chatzelis, “Byzantine Education and Military Manuals,” 112–39.

Byzantine literature in general and military manuals in particular were in fact not exercises in uncritical imitation, divorced from the realities of their time and with little care for originality and innovation. There were two reasons why Byzantine authors reproduced Onasander almost verbatim: they regarded him as an authority on military leadership, and the concept of the ideal Roman general was partially compatible with Byzantine cultural, religious, and moral contexts. This then was added to in the second and third Byzantine approaches to the *Strategikos*, when Byzantine tacticians reworked, adapted, and supplemented the *Strategikos* with original contributions as well as with passages from Isocrates, florilegia, the Bible, and earlier Byzantine military treatises and mirrors for princes in order to reshape the Roman general into a Byzantine one, a military leader embodying all the military, administrative, cultural, religious, and moral qualities of the tenth and eleventh centuries. This reshaping of the ideal military leader is a clear indication of Byzantine authors engaging in a creative and ongoing dialogue with the tradition. They combined original material with authoritative past practices and beliefs, embracing gradual innovation. If Byzantine literature is, as Ingela Nilsson puts it, “the same story, but another,”¹⁰⁵ then the ideal Byzantine general is “the same Roman general, but another.”

Conclusion

All things considered, Onasander's *Strategikos* served as the foundational text for the Byzantine conception of the ideal general. Byzantine military treatises extensively reproduced Onasander's passages on military leadership and just war, sometimes verbatim. The Byzantines adopted Onasander's model for its extensive, detailed, and highly moralizing discussion of the ideal general and just war as well as its compatibility with Byzantine culture and perceptions of leadership, and then, through a process of selective copying and creative adaptation, supplementation and modernization, the Roman general of the *Strategikos* was reshaped

105 I. Nilsson, “The Same Story, but Another: A Reappraisal of Literary Imitation in Byzantium,” in Schiffer and Rhoby, *Imitatio Aemulatio-Variatio*, 195–208. Some comprehensive studies of Byzantine imitation include Cutler, “Originality,” 203–5; A. P. Kazhdan, “Innovation in Byzantium,” in Littlewood, *Originality in Byzantine Literature*, 1–14; Spanos, “Was Innovation Unwanted?,” 43–54.

into a figure thoroughly compatible with the Byzantine military, administrative, and cultural landscape.

This process involved several strategies. Inappropriate material was omitted while new core character traits highly appreciated in the tenth and eleventh centuries were added. Some traits discussed in the *Strategikos* were further elaborated, and in some cases, imbued with a spiritual dimension. Biblical allusions, original comments, passages from earlier Byzantine military treatises and mirrors for princes, and material from florilegia and Isocrates' admonitory speeches *To Demonicus* and *To Nicocles* were all woven into the fabric of Byzantine manuals to facilitate the adaptation and modernization of Onasander and the shaping of the ideal Byzantine military leader.

The use of florilegia and Isocrates' admonitory speeches has noteworthy implications for our understanding of Byzantine military manuals and of their authors. More specifically, the familiarity of the author of the *Sylloge tacticorum* with florilegia and Isocrates' speeches as well as his use of rhetorical exercises of paraphrase and elaboration suggest exposure to introductory rhetorical education. The above techniques and qualities would be mostly appreciated by the aristocracy, the target audience of military manuals. This holds true for most civil officials and those within the military aristocracy who had either an adequate schooling or had attained a high level of scholarly achievement.

By way of these skillful imitations, adaptations, supplementations, modernizations, paraphrases, and elaborations, Byzantine military authors shaped the ideal Byzantine general, "the same Roman general, but another." They transplanted Byzantine ideals onto the morality of military leadership, all while demonstrating literary richness and eloquence.

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